



## Police Uplift Programme

# National benchmarking of the Special Constabulary

## Gwent Police

**May 2023**



# Introduction and Background

This report provides a brief local force summary of data for Gwent Police Special Constabulary, based on the annual national benchmarking surveying across all Special Constabularies in England and Wales completed in late 2022.

This local summary report sits alongside a national summary report of the National Benchmarking. There is also an accompanying national report which summarises the national project on longer-service Special Constables, based on the results of the national survey of long-service Special Constables undertaken in late 2022 and workshops undertaken with Special Constables in ten forces across England and Wales.

Thanks are due to those Special Constables, regular officers and police staff leading Special Constabularies and in Citizens in Policing teams, who spent time responding to the benchmarking survey and collating data. The national benchmarking exercise provides the most comprehensive picture of strategic progress across the Special Constabularies of England and Wales, and it is hoped that this local report gives useful contextual detail of the progress in your force area compared with the national picture.

## Hours and activity

Nationally, the pattern of how active Special Constables are has remained broadly consistent with previous years of data. Over recent years, as the headcount of Special Constables has reduced, the number of hours completed nationally has reduced in a proportionate way.

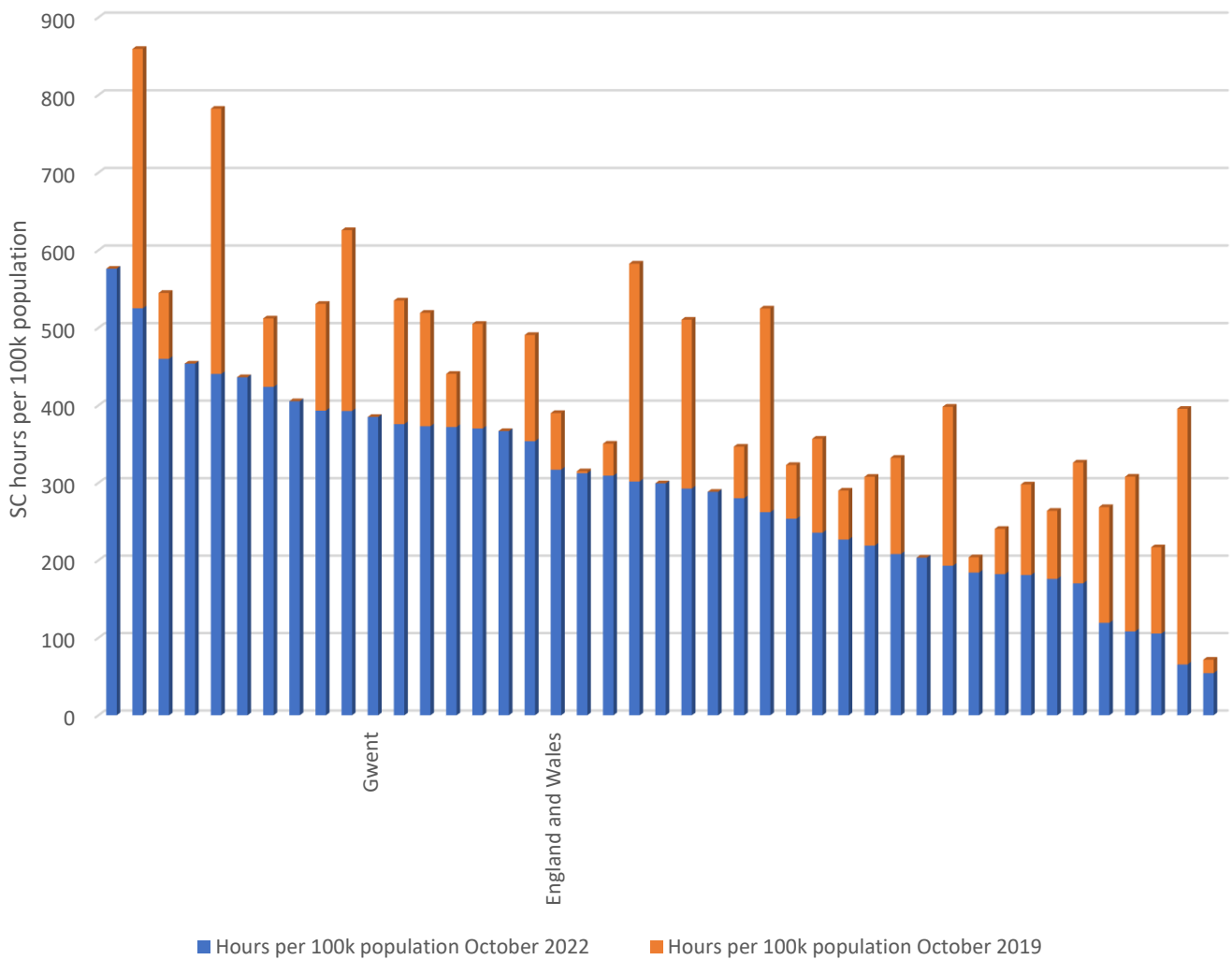
NATIONALLY:

|            |                                 |            |   |            |                              |            |  |
|------------|---------------------------------|------------|---|------------|------------------------------|------------|--|
| <b>26%</b> | Inactive SCs in any given month | <b>17%</b> | SCs serving some hours but less than 16 hours | <b>12%</b> | SCs serving 56 hours or more | <b>17%</b> | SCs long-term dormant (no hours over a prolonged period of time) |
|------------|---------------------------------|------------|---|------------|------------------------------|------------|--|

Nationally, apart from an upward rise in hours reflecting the Covid pandemic lockdown period, overall hours served have been on a downward trajectory over recent years. The below graph shows each individual force hours served in 2022, for comparative purposes expressed as hours per 100k population in the force area. The graph also shows (where higher, which is the case in virtually all forces) the hours served for 2019. Forces have been anonymised, apart from Gwent, which has hours served by its Special Constables at the national average and is one of few forces to have not seen a reduction in hours during the period.

The graph not only shows the quite widespread decline in total hours over recent years, but also shows the scale of variation in hours served between different police force areas, with some police forces having seven times the hours served by their SCs compared to others, when calculated by the size of the population in their policing area.

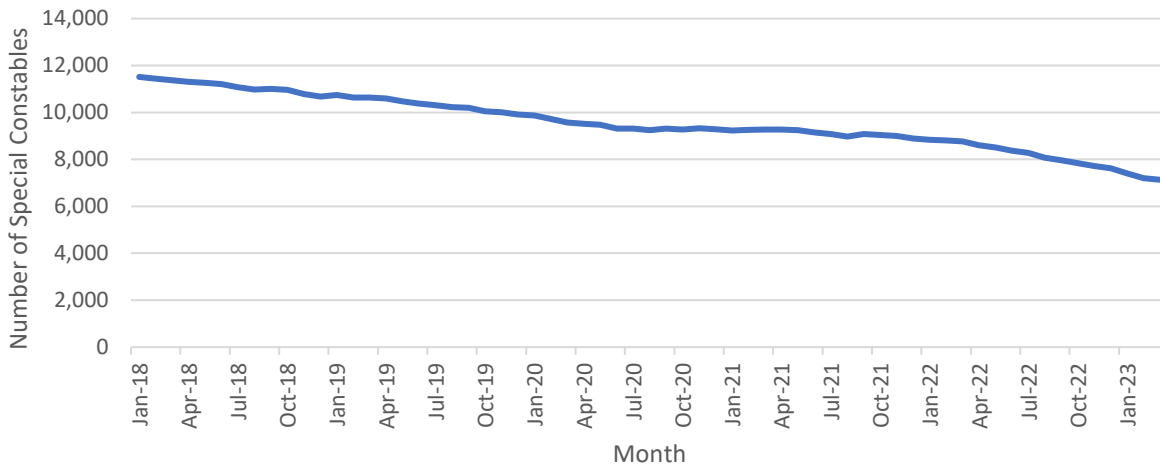
Hours served by Special Constables per 100,000 force area population, in October 2022, and showing October 2019 where higher



# Reducing numbers and short careers

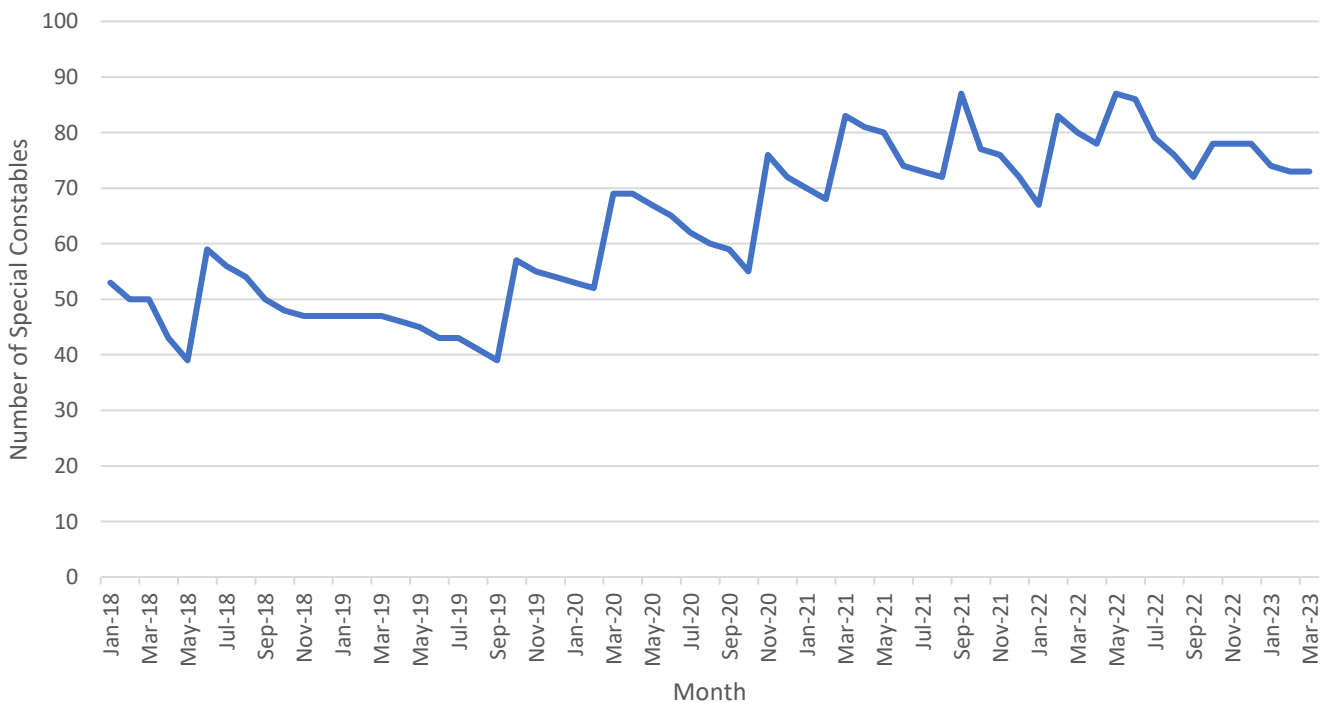
Nationally, the headcount of Special Constables has continued to fall steadily over the past five years, and in recent months the pace of that decrease has slightly increased.

Monthly Headcount of Special Constables, England and Wales, January 2018 - March 2023

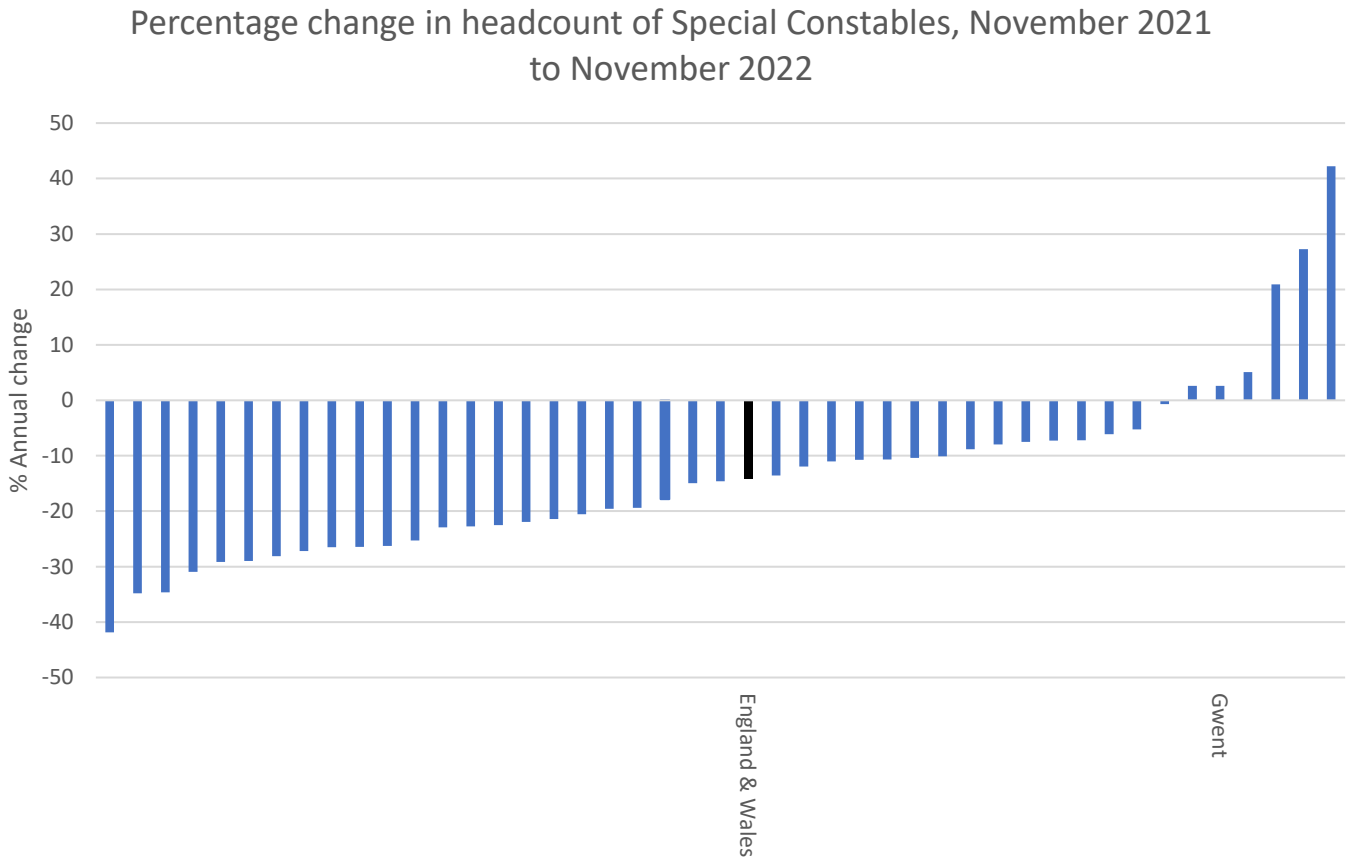


Gwent's trajectory doesn't mirror that of the national picture. There have been peaks and troughs in headcount, which seem to have stabilised over recent months. Headcount is up 38% when compared with 2018.

Monthly Headcount of Special Constables, Gwent

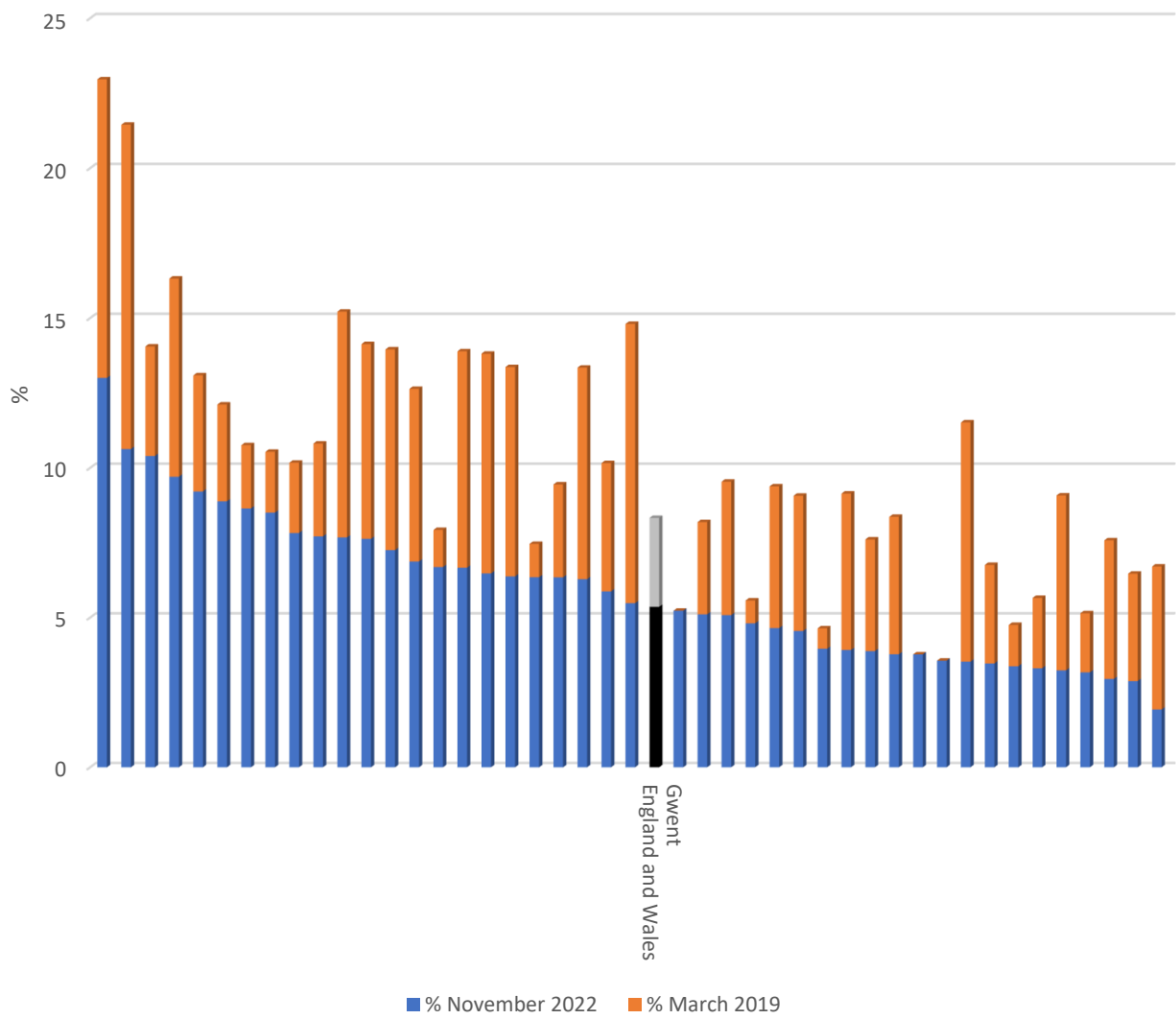


Looking at change in headcount for (anonymised) individual Special Constabularies, the national picture of shrinkage in headcount over recent years is evident in virtually every police force area. Gwent headcount was up by 2% over the past year and is one of few forces to have experienced growth.

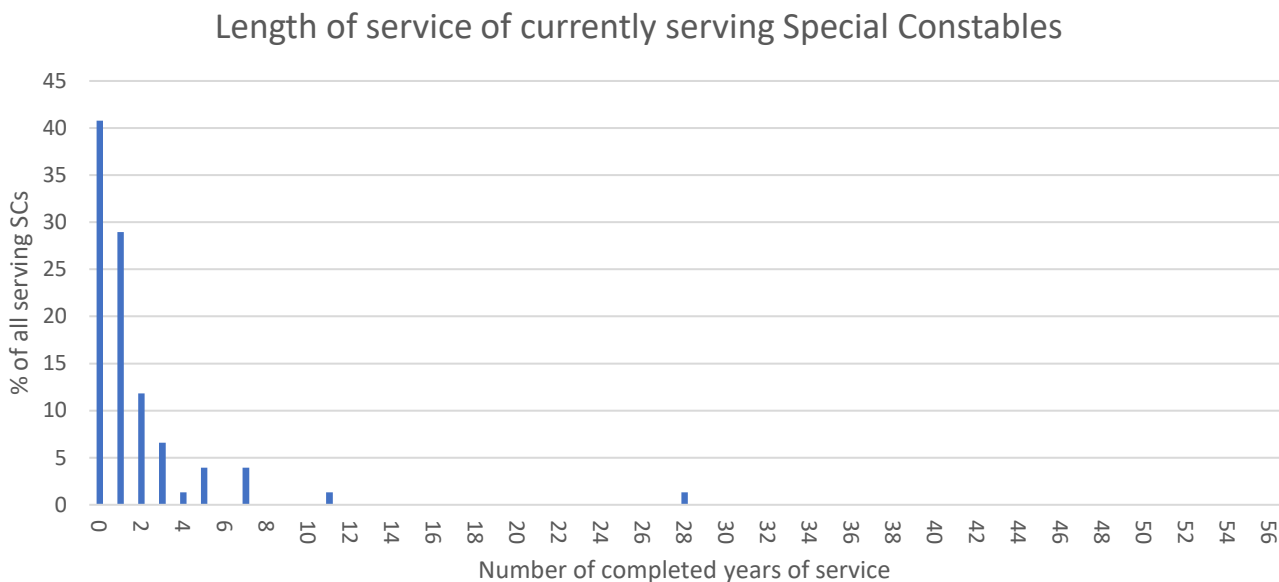


The graph on the next page of Special Constable numbers expressed as a percentage of the regular officer headcount reflects that the vast majority of police forces are not achieving anywhere near the 10% national aspirational scale for that ratio of SCs to regular officers. Virtually all police forces had planned to grow numbers during this period, but in reality, almost all have seen quite significant further reductions in numbers. In Gwent the Special Constabulary headcount compared to the regular service mirrors that of the national average (5.4%), falling short of the 10% discussed nationally.

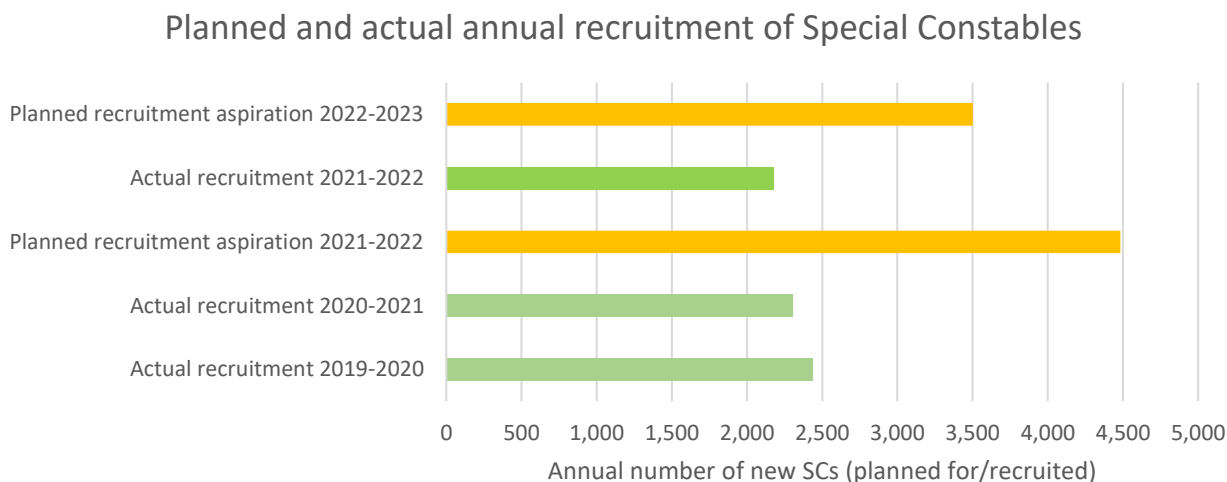
## Special Constabulary headcount as a percentage of headcount of regular officers, March 2019 and November 2022



Whilst Special Constables numbers are influenced by many factors (e.g. Uplift, wider socio-economic and generational trends, etc.), primarily there are two key drivers for headcount of Special Constables. Firstly, length of service. Many Special Constables have short service careers, and this pattern makes Special Constabularies unsustainable, with the median length of career nationally being only 2.2 years. The length of service profile for Gwent, based on the data shared for the benchmarking exercise, is summarised in the graph below.



The second key driver for the reducing numbers of Special Constables has been lower than normal volumes of recruitment. Nationally, most police forces have aspired in the recent past to recruit more Special Constables than they have been able to achieve in reality.



# Recruitment and training

Nationally, progress towards implementing the National Sift approach, and the Special Constabulary Learning Programme (Phase 1 and Phase 2) are summarised in the table below.

| Stage of implementation reported in the benchmarking | NATIONAL SIFT | SCLP Phase 1 | SCLP Phase 2 |
|--|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Implemented/completed                                | 16            | 11           | 3            |
| Under implementation/ongoing                         | 9             | 4            | 4            |
| Initial scoping                                      | 7             | 12           | 12           |
| Not implementing                                     | 4             | 13           | 17           |
| No answer  | 7             | 3            | 7            |

Gwent reported:

National Sift: Not implementing

SCLP Phase 1: Completed

SCLP Phase 2: Initial scoping

## Limited tutoring support

Nationally across police forces a key recurrent gap in the support of Special Constables, and a key precipitator of early career exit for Special Constables, remains poor and under-resourced models of initial induction, tutoring, and integration. Only 12 Special Constabularies indicated that they had a structured and resourced model of tutoring in place.

| Tutoring and structured support   |    |
|---|----|
| No response   | 5  |
| No tutoring or dedicated or structured support  | 14 |
| Some access to tutoring and dedicated or structured learning support, but limited and primarily just accompanying shifts in mainstream team setting | 12 |
| A more structured and resourced model of dedicated tutoring and support   | 12 |

Gwent indicated that there is structured support in place for new SC's on division.



# Exit surveys and interviews

Nationally, there is considerable variability in approach, and quality, of exit surveying and interviewing of departing Special Constables. There also seems little usage of approaches such as ‘stay interviews’, or other more innovative retention approaches with those SCs who may be seeing themselves as being at the end of their volunteer careers. Current approaches often lack coverage, and independence, and commonly can consist of nothing more than quick chats with an SC supervisor (who may, in some instances, be part of the reason the Special Constable is choosing to depart...).

| Exit surveys and interviews                              |    |
|--|----|
| Not undertaken/not systematically undertaken/no response | 6  |
| Proforma or online survey only                           | 8  |
| Interviews undertaken by SC supervisor                   | 17 |
| Interviews undertaken by senior SC supervision           | 6  |
| Interviews undertaken by CiP team or others              | 6  |
| Interviews undertaken independently                      | 0  |

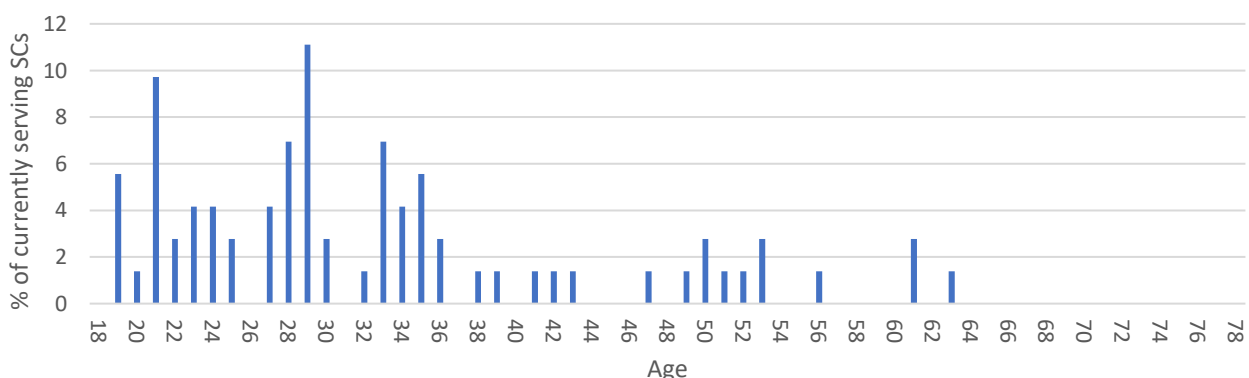
Gwent reported that exit interviews are undertaken by all leavers, and these are conducted by HR in line with force process for PC’s.

## Age

Nationally, the age profile of the Special Constabulary remains skewed towards younger Special Constables. With most Special Constables still joining in their younger twenties, and most leaving after relatively short careers again in their twenties. A majority of Special Constables nationally are aged 35 or younger.

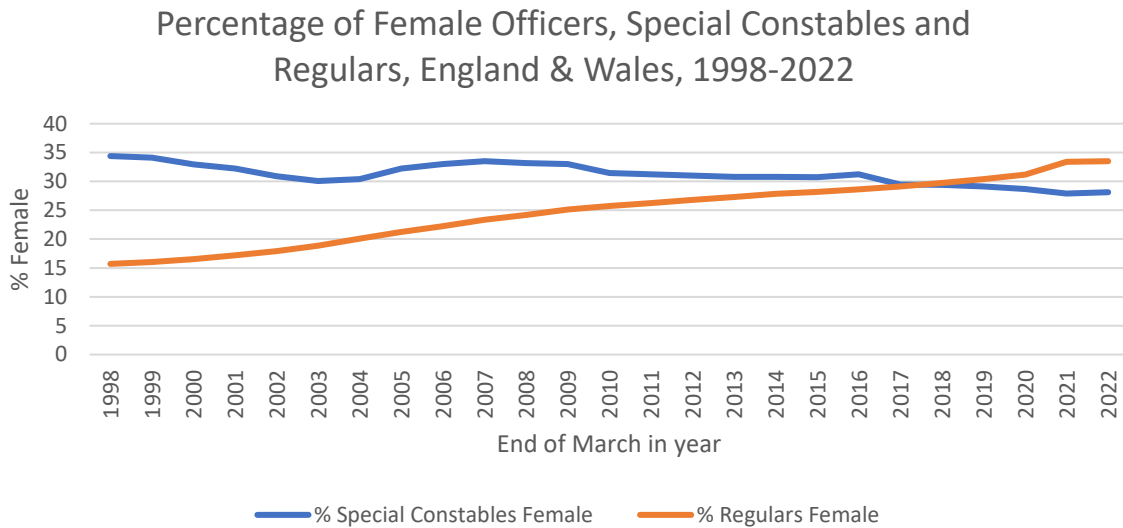
Gwent have a similar age profile which is skewed towards younger Special Constables. Although there is a core of older Special Constables that bring experience and usually longer length of service.

Age of currently serving Special Constables

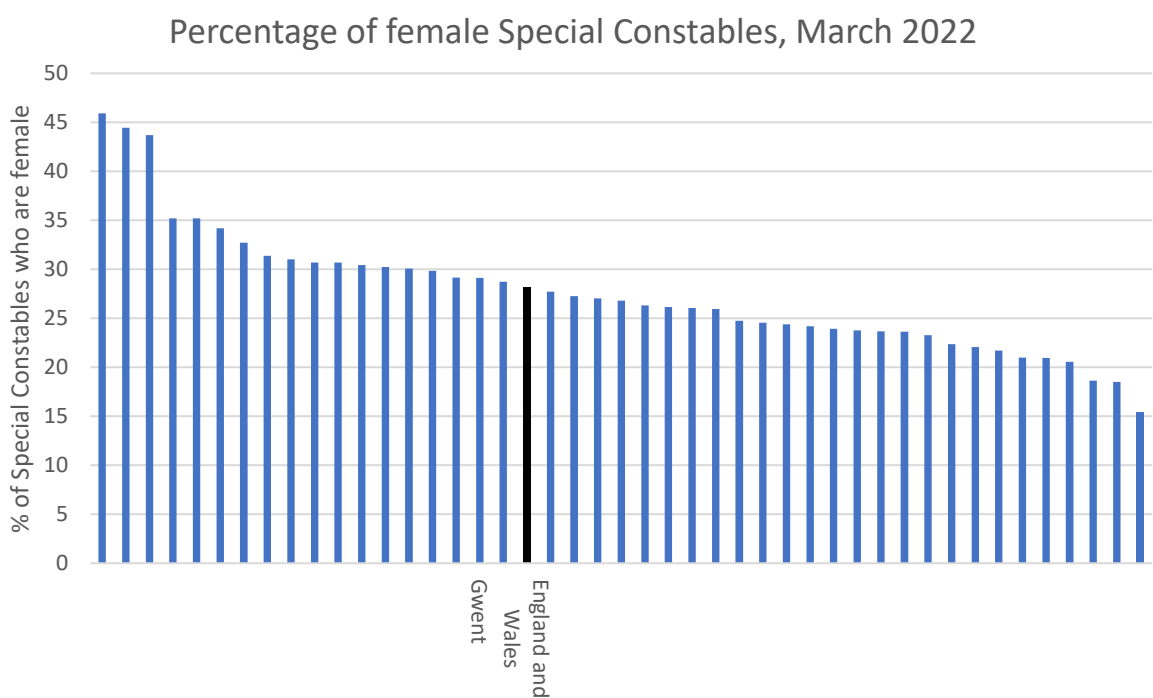


# Gender

Nationally, females remain under-represented in the Special Constabulary, with only 28% of all Special Constables being female. Twenty five years ago, the proportion of female SCs was twice the proportion of female regulars. Over the past quarter of a century, the proportion of female regulars has slowly but steadily grown, whilst the proportion of female SCs has slowly decreased.



As with many aspects of the Special Constabulary, there is a quite widespread variation between Special Constabularies in respect of their female representation. Gwent sits marginally above the national average for female representation with 29%, compared to 28% across England and Wales.



# Next steps

Based upon the national benchmarking and longer-service Special Constables work, local police forces are encouraged to consider the following next steps:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Developing a strategic force plan for Special Constabulary recruitment.</b> | Considering producing a written strategy, articulating the purpose, required capability, and scale, that is desired for the Special Constabulary in coming years.<br>To consider growing a more strategic approach to achieving that locally, reflecting the national evidence-base for recruitment and retention.   |
| <b>2. Shifting the focus of recruitment onto longer-serving SCs.</b>              | Developing further force profiles for the desired local recruit pattern, and then recruiting in more purposive and pro-active ways. Shift from younger demographic. Build on the recruitment profiles of those more likely to serve longer-term. Address issues of female engagement, and of engagement of global majority populations and of all communities. |
| <b>3. Age</b>   | Shifting locally the age profile of the Special Constabulary. Older joiners (35+) are three times more likely to stay longer-term, than those joining in their late teens or early twenties. Step away from predominant recruitment profiles of those primarily motivated by a 'stepping stone' into the regular service.                                      |
| <b>4. Tutoring and early service experience</b>                                   | Addressing any local gaps in induction, integration, and initial practice tutoring and support. Consider properly resourced and structured tutoring models. Ensuring in force that every new Special Constable has a dedicated 'single point of contact' who can support them in their early journey.  |
| <b>5. Specialisms</b>   | Considering developing a medium-term plan for growing the specialist contribution of the Special Constabulary, reflecting on innovative practice and interesting initiatives elsewhere being developed in other police forces.   |
| <b>6. Gender</b>  | Producing a local plan for prioritising female experience, engagement, retention, and empowerment in the Special Constabulary. Considering local challenges and opportunities, alongside the national picture of challenges of female representation in longer-serving cohorts, specialisms, and leadership.   |
| <b>7. Leadership</b>  | Considering locally the most effective models for leadership and support of Special Constables, whilst also aiming to develop greater national consistency of structures and practice for SC leadership. Consider leadership selection and succession, processes of appointment, induction, training and development, mentoring and support.                   |